AN INTERVIEW WITH MRS. ANNE WILKINS

OF BAILEY'S CROSSROADS, VIRGINIA

Interviewed by W. Joseph Coleman on May 20, 1974

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This is an interview with Mrs. AnneWilkins, former member of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. It is being conducted on May 20, 1974, at Mrs. Wilkin's home; the interviewer is Joe Coleman, representing the Virginia Room of the Fairfax County Public Library.

Joe Coleman: You weren't originally from Fairfax County, were you?

Mrs. AnneWilkins: No, I came from South Carolina.

Coleman: About when did you come to Fairfax County?

Wilkins: I came to Fairfax County in 1939.

Coleman: Perhaps you could tell us a little bit about what Fairfax County was like during that time?

Wilkins: At that time, Fairfax County was still pretty much a rural county. In 1940, I believe the population was like 40,000, and it's 500,000 now. We moved into a house over on a place called Lee Boulevard Heights, just inside 7 Corners, and around us was pasture. The hill across the way by the medical center was a beautiful wooded hill and from there to 7 Corners was a pasture that cattle grazed on. Much of the County was the same way. Falls Church was developed first - Falls Church and parts of Alexandria ... Belle Haven ... There were no other suburbs to speak of.

Coleman: Why did you move to this area from South Carolina?

Wilkins: Oh, I came to Washington to law school. We lived there for a couple of years and like all suburbanites since, we came to the suburbs to raise our children.

Coleman: What was the Bailey's Crossroads area like at that time?

Wilkins: Bailey's Crossroads was just Irwin Payne's store, Dowden's store and Oliver's store - three country crossroads stores was all that there was anywhere around.

Coleman: When would you say that this area really started growing?

Wilkins: Well, the first real development started during the war around 1945. The Willston Apartments were built about '46, Culmore in '48; and that was the first real push for high density development. In the meantime, of course, the Falls Church area had grown. Single family residences grew out from Falls Church rather than the city.

Coleman: I understand that you began your political career with the Willston Apartment Zoning.

Wilkins: Right, like suburbanites today, we didn't want anyone else to share our blessings. It took me about 10 years to realize we couldn't do that - that we didn't have the moral or legal right to prevent other people from living in Fairfax County. I was one of the first advocates of a countywide master plan. The first thing that I did when I got on the Board was to try to get a master plan set up, with the idea not of preventing people from coming in, but of seeing that high density development went into areas where we could best provide the facilities, and the same theme goes through to the present conversation, but they're not really doing it that way. They're trying to keep people out. We didn't think we could do that; I still think it's not right.

Coleman: You were on the committee to change the county's form of government, weren't you?

Wilkins: Well, not on the committee. I was working with the League of Women Voters advocating a change in the form of government. We set up an ad hoc citizens' committee of our own, about fifteen people. We tried to draw people from all walks of life. The idea first came from the Federation of Citizens Associations and the League of Women Voters, and there were a couple of League members and representatives of the Federation, but other than that, we tried to get some of the old, longtime residents, for example, in the Herndon area and various parts of the county, so it was a broad-based advocacy of change in form of government.

Coleman: Why did you feel that this was necessary at the time?

Wilkins: Well, the old county supervisor form was not too efficient... One thing that struck us as a real problem was the fact that all of these people who controlled the county budget were elected separately. There was no budget control, so to speak. The commissioner of Revenue, the treasurer, the Commonwealth Attorney, and supervisors were all elected separately, and to add to that problem the school board was appointed by something called a school trustee electoral board which made it so that there were half a dozen different agencies controlling their own budgets; but the supervisors had to raise the taxes, and we just didn't think this was a good business policy. The county executive form is

the one we advocated - actually the League of Women Voters and the Federation of Citizens Associations advocated the county manager form - but we both compromised. The David Lawrence committee was appointed by the Board of Supervisors to study this thing. They came up with the county executive form as the compromise and we supported that because we thought it was almost what we wanted.

Coleman: The county manager form was the form that Arlington had at that time?

Wilkins: No, there are two county management forms. I'd have to give you a little history on that to explain it. Arlington was the first county in Virginia to realize the shortcomings of the supervisor form and wanted what they call county board form which was set up specifically for Arlington County. At that time Harry Byrd was governor and he called in experts to make a study and they came up with the recommendation for alternate county management and county executive. Now, notice the Arlington form was already on the books specifically for Arlington. The consultants came up with the new form which was county manager and county executive which was an optional form. The county could determine by vote which one they wanted, and those two new forms were much more streamlined in a business way than the Arlington form. Arlington, as you probably know, still has an elected commissioner of revenue and an elected treasurer which was one of the things we were trying to get away from.

But the form that was set up in the Virginia statutes in 1932 was based on the work that had been done by some of the national organizations, and it was just about as streamlined as a local government could be. It was the governing body elected by the people and the governing body electing its chairman and appointing a professional to be the administrator, and, of course, at that time, it was new, but since then, it's gone throughout the country.

Coleman: Were there any problems in adopting the county executive form of government?

Wilkins: Well, there's always the problem of people who don't want to change. They like it the way it is and they don't want to change. Several others have tried to change and have not been able to because of the political influence of those elected officials who were going to be voted out of office, so to speak. We overcame that in Fairfax because we had a large number of new people that weren't really ... set in their ways. ..... Then what we did was put people who held elective offices into the new jobs in the appointed offices. Both of them were held over. That's the treasurer and commissioner of revenue. So the problem was not as severe as it might have been.

Coleman: You actually ran for the Board of Supervisors for the first time in 1951. What were the issues in that campaign?

Wilkins: Well, the big problem then was to put the county executive government into effect. Having studied it thoroughly during the campaign, I felt I was in a position to help.

There were other issues: we had growth problems that you today just wouldn't be able to understand at all. What actually got me started, got me interested in politics was not so much the zoning question but the public health situation which predated the zoning problem. My children were in school at that time and I felt that the health department was not giving adequate attention to communicable disease control for one thing, and I went to talk to the public health officer (this was during the war) who was on loan from the federal government -- we didn't have one in Virginia, we had to borrow -- and he was very helpful, he recognized the problem and he said ..... "I've done all I can do; the citizens have got to help me ..... I can't do anything without a budget." And this was the thing I first went to work on and tried to organize citizen support for public health facilities. We set up a group called the Lay Health Association. Its objective was to broaden the scope of the health department and I think in the long run we were very successful. Maybe the health department may have even gone a little far at this point. They have an empire ...

.....

Environmental sanitation was just non-existent. We just didn't have anything. Somebody checking on restaurants and this kind of thing. We didn't have anybody checking septic fields. You could just go put one in. There were regulations, but there was no way to --

Coleman: Was there, prior to the time the master plan was adopted in the County any type of planning at all for the County, or was it just zoned all one way or what?

Wilkins: There was no master plan. There was the Design office, Subdivision Control office. Both had been adopted in the forties. We had the tools but we didn't have the plans ..... so in 1952 we brought in consultants to prepare a master plan for the County as a whole, and this I think was the way to go about it, and this, I think, is the way it should be gone about today -- prepare a master plan for Fairfax County as a whole, not district by district. This is another fault - a real big problem with the County executive form of government. The County management form requires election of supervisors at large, so they would have been responsible for the people in the entire County. The County executive form provides for election by districts and what has grown up is district representation where each supervisor thinks about what the wishes of the small, small community are without regard to Fairfax County as an entirety, which I think is bad.

Coleman: You were active in establishing the Federation of Citizens?

Wilkins: I was not, but my husband was. He was, I guess, second or third president of the Federation.

Coleman: It's very interesting. You were active in both the League and your husband in the Federation, probably two of the most powerful citizen organizations in the County?

Wilkins: I guess the Federation was started before the League. I guess I was one of the first League members.

Coleman: ..... Along with the health problem in Fairfax County, you were also active in establishing Fairfax Hospital?

Wilkins: Yes, my husband was chairman of the first Hospital Commission that built the original hospital.

Coleman: These bond issues that came up at that time, like the hospital, schools and sewage, and things like that (interruption) ..... Were the bond issues easily passed in those days or was there quite a bit of opposition?

Wilkins: I don't think we had too much problem with passing bond issues. Most of the bond issues, of course, were for schools, and by then, we had enough new citizens that wanted good education facilities to put them through. I feel that we had to work hard on the first two or three ..... One bond issue for sewers .... There was one in the Holmes Run Watershed which was a district bond issue and we had to work hard to get that passed, but after that they seemed to go very well.

Coleman: You said your children went to school in the county. Probably one of the reasons you went into politics was that you weren't particularly satisfied with the way the schools were in those days.

Wilkins: This is true. My children actually didn't go to school in the county for the first few years. My daughter went out of the county to a private school because the county schools were just impossible ..... non-existent. When she was in the fifth grade, we brought her back and put her in county schools. She went to the old Madison Elementary School in Falls Church. And my son who was younger went to his first and second year in a basement apartment in Culmore which was the Bailey's School.

Coleman: Did they ever go to the old Bailey's School up at the crossroads?

Wilkins: No, they had organized a new school up here at Culmore and went from the apartments into the new building. Of course, that building was not any great shakes. There were four or five schools built at the same time under that bond issue, and they were in effect four room schools which didn't even have central furnaces. They had some kind of heat plant which is not what we know today. But by then, we had enough budget to get reasonably good teachers which was important.

Coleman: In 1951, when you were elected to the Board, you were the first woman ever elected to the Board, do you think that caused any problems in your election?

Wilkins: Well, it probably made it harder, but I don't know that it made too much difference. I think it took a while to get the old gentlemen I sat with to understand that I knew something about the County and what I was talking about. But it didn't take long. It worked very well.

Coleman: I also understand that you had a very interesting campaign in 1951. I've heard it referred to as a classic grassroots campaign with the League being very instrumental in your election.

Wilkins: Well, a great many people that I worked with in County government change were my campaign workers. We set up our own organization. The campaign was organized block by block, but we covered a very small territory ..... The whole Falls Church district was not very many. I don't remember the population. It was 15,000 I believe, when it was divided. There weren't very many people.

Coleman: While you were in office, it really must have grown enormously. When you left office it was the largest district in the County, wasn't it?

Wilkins: Well of course it was divided several times. It was divided into Mason and Falls Church and then later Mason was rearranged so that part of the old Falls Church district was put back in it and Springfield was taken out. When I left, it was the heaviest populated district. It went all the way from Bailey's Crossroads to Springfield. Springfield was beginning to grow then and it was unknown territory. I mean everybody was new. They didn't know anything about the County, they didn't know anything about me, and I had to start from scratch there.

Coleman: In 1954 the Supreme Court decision on segregation was handed down. You were on the Board at the time. Did the Board have any reaction to that decision?

Wilkins: The Board as a whole -- well they basically were going to abide by the law -- there was enough sentiment among board members to want to delay it if possible and we had many a confrontation with some of the old-timers that were very, very bitter is not the word - it was even worse than that - they were frightened, and I didn't have sense enough to be frightened. Some of the Board members were frightened. These people would sit through Board meetings when we had an issue, a question, in regard to this problem to determine, and they would ... they were ugly, that's the only thing I can say -- and finally some Board members called for County police protection. These were the people that were the problem -- rabid segregationists. And still it was a small group, I would say, the group (some of them are still around) they were on petitions and so forth. I concluded at the time that there were approximately two thousand of them in the County. In '54 our population was what?

Over a hundred thousand ... but they were very loud, very, very vocal.

Coleman: Do you think these were primarily people that had been in the County for a long time rather than the newcomers?

Wilkins: Most of them were.

Coleman: How long did it take to desegregate the schools? Were they desegregated right away at that time or did it take quite a while, do you remember?

Wilkins: Well, it was no real problem in Fairfax County. We had no reason to have a problem. We had a racial minority of something like 2% in the school system. There were some problems from that same group of two thousand people that caused disturbances. I don't think there was anything very serious about it.

Coleman: During the late fifties the County started talking about becoming a city and I understand that you favored that at the time. Could you tell me some of the reasons for that?

Wilkins: It is a little difficult to recall. It was primarily the annexation problem that brought this up. We tried over and over again to get the General Assembly to give Fairfax County some protection from Annexation. We were threatened by the City of Alexandria. Alexandria did annex in 1952, 7 square miles and continuously from that time we were threatened by another suit from Alexandria. The City of Falls Church was doing the same thing and actually towns could annex. Vienna annexed and Fairfax City annexed part of the territory. The Legislature would not give us the protection. Gradually of course they did, but at that time we were not sure, so we were

just in a state of frustration. We were looking for some answer to this problem and I guess I had as much to do with thinking this up as anybody. If we, ... under this existing law we could become a city, under certain circumstances. We had to annex- to consolidate with a town or city and we tried to consolidate with the town of Clifton. The court threw it out. Now the reason for it was a little muddled to me but nevertheless they did. Apparently the court decided that Clifton was not one we could consolidate with because it was a town entirely within the County. Nevertheless the reason we were trying to do this was to give us the city form of government which would protect us against annexation. It was almost impossible to plan for facilities and suddenly find that the territory we had used in budgeting ... in floating the bonds ... that we counted on the growth to pay for the facilities suddenly taken away by Falls Church or Alexandria or Fairfax City. Now I might add that since that time the courts have thrown out all the annexation suits against Fairfax County on the basis of the fact that the County could provide the services as well or better than the adjoining cities, so we are finally free from that problem.

Coleman: When Fairfax town became a city, how did you feel about that at that time?

Wilkins: That was one of the things that we lost in our attempt to become a city ourselves. Fairfax City quickly became a city in order to prevent them from becoming swallowed up by Fairfax County. They would have lost their identity as a town and I think it was a mistake ... it was just too bad that it happened. It put our County seat - the location of our County government within the City rather than the County for one thing.

They, of course, regulate the territory around where the County Office is - that plus they have to go with the County on the schools - they haven't been able to maintain their own school system. It's not a viable unit, that is not as economic as it would have been if it had been altogether.

Coleman: To go back a little bit, around 1954-55, around the time of your second election. Before that time there had been almost no Republicans in this part of Virginia in 1954-55 quite a few Republicans started to come into power in Northern Virginia. Why do you think that was?

Wilkins: I think it was new people moving in, let's see in 1954 who was in the White House?

Coleman: Eisenhower.

Wilkins: This is what did it. People had moved in with that administration and had become active in local politics. I don't know that it had any particular effect on the local government because I've never seen that there was any Democratic or Republican sewer line, but it was probably caused by the influx of population--new people with the administration.

Coleman: Also in fifty-five quite a few of the old timers on the Board were replaced by new people. Do you think that was because of the adoption of the county executive form?

Wilkins: No I think it was because of the influx of population, of new people who wanted ... younger, more active people. You have to realize that the upsurge in population is bound to have some effect on things.

Coleman: Quite a bit of controversy arose in 1960-61 amongst a couple of people on the Board of Supervisors and some citizens when you formed a

coalition with the three Republicans on the Board. How did you feel about that at the time and what were your reasons for doing it?

Wilkins: As I just said, I never thought there was any Democratic or Republican sewer line or any other thing that had to do with local government, but it just so happened that at that time some of the Democrats were somewhat conservative shall we say, in their outlook on local government and I felt that some of the Republicans could better ... have more my point of view than some of the Democrats did and I thought the best thing for the County was a coalition of people that I felt were more progressive--that's how come the coalition that could control the appointments.

Coleman: In 1963 there was the election when you ran against Stanford E. Parris - You lost against him. What do you think were the reasons for this?

Wilkins: There were a great many reasons. One of them was that I was tired of it and I didn't want to work hard. I had paid more attention to the County Government than I had to my political organization. For one thing - it was non-existent and to go about setting up a new one in a totally new territory at that point it was more than I was interested in and then Parris was an eager young man and on his way up which was obvious and there were undercurrents - some dirty tricks were played. There were many reasons.

Coleman: You were Board Chairman for two of the years that you were on the Board. Was the Chairman at that time a position of any power?

Wilkins: The Chairman is always a position of power. It doesn't appear

to be the way the government was set up, but you can always call for the vote at the right time. You can always call for the vote from the right side. You can control in that fashion. Incidentally, the Chairman had a vote which was not true of the elected Chairman for a while.

Coleman: Since you left the Board of Supervisors, have you been active in politics since that time?

Wilkins: Not really. I've been with Edward R. Carr, Inc. handling his land and commercial sales in Springfield and Annandale.

Coleman: Perhaps as a summary how do you think the County has changed in quality as well as quantity while you were on the Board and since that time?

Wilkins: Well, of course it has grown tremendously - the County Government has grown tremendously. In fact, what we got in motion has grown up maybe perhaps a little more than it should have. It seems we have something of a bureaucracy up there and this is the danger in any large government and it is very difficult to prevent. All the things we started working for we have in abundance at this point like schools and classrooms and football fields - 2 football fields, 2 lighted football fields out my window. It's more than seems necessary. It seems like an expenditure beyond needs. I think that the budget could be watched a little more closely.

Coleman: When you first moved here you actually lived on an old farm - the Munson Hill Farm, wasn't it?

Wilkins: No, we first lived in a small house in Lee Boulevard Heights.

Coleman: I mean after that.

Wilkins: We moved to Munson Hill in 1943.

Coleman: There was quite a bit of land around here then - that was a farm by itself at that time.

Wilkins: We had 32 acres, there was an adjoining property of 40 acres with a farm house. They weren't big farms, but they had been at one time.

Coleman: Did you have anybody farm it, or did you just live on it?

Wilkins: No, we just lived on it. It never was farmed while we were there. We had turkeys and chickens, hogs - we did a little farming.

Coleman: Was that not the site of the old Munson Hill Nursery?

Wilkins: Yes and so it had been many years since it was actually a farm, as you think of a farm. There were wind rows of trees, plants that had just grown up in a row as in a nursery. I'd like to add something about the master plan process. When we started we brought in a consultant in 1952 to help us make a plan of the County as a whole. It's interesting to note that while he planned the County as a whole, it was based on communities - so to speak - not to be separate communities, in other words there wasn't a community here and you jumped over a space to a community there. There was one community after another. There were communities around existing cores mostly and then new ones set up like Springfield. But they were all tied together. He started off with plans for public facilities, plans for transportation, plans for the various things that go into making a master plan. We're hearing about this all over again and there really isn't anything very different from the master plan we adopted in - most of it was adopted by 1956.

That's when the residential plan was adopted in 1956. The Zoning ordinance, based on the master plan was adopted in 1956. And, it's just the same thing over again, except the town zoning so to speak under the present theory. The plans were all adopted except the transportation plan which was never adopted. Fairfax County has never had a transportation plan, because it takes political fortitude to adopt a transportation plan. No people want roads going close to them. They want roads, of course we talked about roads as streets then - we didn't have transit in mind then. So it was politically impossible to adopt a transportation plan and it still is so apparently.

Coleman: Do you think that's because the state actually does control quite a bit of the road system in Fairfax County, do you think that that would be a large factor in that?

Wilkins: No, I don't think so. I think it's the plan. The people are afraid of the roads. They don't want a road near them. We were talking then about destroying trees and noise and what all. But I thought that these things were absolutely necessary, part of the needed public facilities and we had to plan for them. So what we did, I was on the planning commission too. The planning commission adopted a transportation plan and it was used as a guide all these years. One of the things that we got as a result of that was the location of the beltway. The beltway was on Fairfax County's master plan, which had not been adopted by the Board. But when various subdivisions went in, they were not required, but coaxed, shall we say, some of the builders would say black-jacked into dedicating or at least reserving the right-of-way for the beltway so when the state got ready to build the beltway the right-of-way was there most of the way. Where it had been reserved they had to buy, but many places it was already dedicated. This was what we were trying to do, but politically the plan could not be adopted officially.

Coleman: Do you think those plans really made a big difference in the job of the County for the future of the County at that time or development at that time? Or do you think that after the plans were adopted rezoning started occurring right away?

Wilkins: Well, rezoning never stopped. The thing that people seem to forget today is that a master plan is not a panacea; it's not something perfect, it's a goal. And I think these plans were excellent as goals, they showed what we wanted the place to be. But we had sense enough to know in those days that we would not be able to do it perfectly. We tried to get there and we made mistakes, and they are still making mistakes. The justification for rezoning is that it was a mistake in the first place, in other words that it was planned wrong. A rezoning might be in agreement with the plan. If it's not in agreement with the plan the applicant has to show that the plan was wrong or that something has changed.

Coleman: You have stated that the coming into the County of new people was very important, electing new people to the Board and the initiation of master plans and improvement to schools. At that time the western part of the County, Centreville and Herndon were pretty stable in growth and population. Was there any type of regional problem between that part of the County and this part of the County?

Wilkins: None except that they were likely to be more conservative in their thinking, likely to be opposed to new developments. I don't mean residential developments, but money for schools and things of this kind.

Coleman: And they frequently opposed school bonds and things like that?

Wilkins: That's true.

Coleman: And did that part of the County oppose the master plan adoption?

Wilkins: Some areas did. We had something in the original master plan that was not adopted. They had a five acre zoning classification. This was fought by people out in the rural sections - they didn't want it. Now of course some of them have come in and asked for it - rural agricultural zone. The idea of the five acre zoning in the first place was to set up some estate areas. One thing that the consultant, Francis Dodd McHugh, said to the Board, that it was easier as time goes on and it's necessary to redevelop these areas, which he says it will be because it's going to grow. It's easier to redevelop if you have large lots than if you have half acre lots. If you have half acre lots, it is almost impossible. Well, I may not have got what he was talking about at the time, but I may not have known as well then as I know now what he was talking about. It's impossible for a realtor to put together a subdivision that's been divided into half-acre lots. There are a number of them in the Bailey's crossroads area for example that are underused and have dilapidated houses on them. I don't mean in the Negro sections, I mean anywhere. ..... But to get those together is not economically feasible unless you're going to put a Skyline Tower on them, because you have to pay so much for the house. If you had even an acre lot, a 2 acre lot, a five acre lot, you could pay the value of the house, there's enough land to balance it. So he had the right idea that, it was better to set up some large lot areas so that it could be redeveloped as time changed when we found that we were not almighty and couldn't determine what the future would be.

There's one thing you haven't asked me about that might be of interest to people in the future and that is the airport story. I don't know whether you have discussed that with anybody or not. The dates I son't be able to pin down.

exactly but it was about 1958 I guess. The County suddenly was faced with the problem of a new metropolitan area airport being plopped down it its midst. At that time it was going to be put in the Burke area. There was a great furor down in the Burke area. Burke was relatively undeveloped then, but the people that were there were bitterly opposed and the Board was fighting it on the basis - just that is would hurt the people in the area and we were getting absolutely nowhere. It occurred to me that there must be some other arguments and at this point the site had been selected, some of the land had been acquired and the matter was before a Senate committee to authorize the acquisition - the construction of the airport really. I began to examine other aspects of the thing and finally went to the soils scientist. He did a study of the Burke airport areas and he did a study of a couple of other areas that had been alternate sites. One of them was at Chantilly. Actually it was near Pender, not exactly where the present airport is. It came up with some maps showing the soils. I took the maps and went to Capitol Hill and said "look" - I found a way to reach the man who was chairman of the Senate committee. I couldn't get to him, but I got to his administrative assistant and showed him these maps, the soil maps which indicated that the soils in the Burke area were Glenig, and there was a considerable amount of granite. In some areas the Glenig soil went as deep as 18 feet. What that meant interpreting it into airport construction in a soil sense was that the soil would have to be removed and replaced with a heavier substance in order to be a foundation for the airport runways, whereas in the Pender-Chantilly area there was at the most 18'' of topsoil above a base shale which meant that you didn't have to do that. You had your base already there and translated into dollars the difference in price of construction of an airport at Burke as compared with the construction of an airport at Chantilly was just unbelievable.

Well, I hadn't gotten home before the senator's administrative assistant called me and asked me to come back. So they set up a hearing and, I guess I must have been chairman of the Board that year because we went down with the engineer and the soil scientist and everybody. The end result of that was that the appropriation was stopped in the senate committee and a new study was authorized, made by General Quesada, he was administrator for FAA. He had a study made. They came up with a relocation of the airport as you know and that's history. Their reason was not soil, their primary reason at that time was the traffic pattern. However, it was the soil study that stopped it long enough for them to take another look.

Coleman: You wanted to tell us a little about the Council of Governments for the Washington Metropolitan area?

Wilkins: I guess the first meeting of what ended up as the Council of Governments must have taken place when I was chairman because I went to represent Fairfax County to a very informal get-together in the Commissioner's room in the District Building. I remember very well, Carlton Massey and myself went. It seemed very reasonable to try to get the heads of government - of local governments together to work out some of the problems. It was very informal at the time. It was the first time that I had seen what a District Commissioner looked like. I had never seen one before. It was this kind of a thing and the meeting grew into what is now the Council of Governments. It went thru the stages - we had several names, but we set up committees on the things that most affected all the jurisdictions. One of those was the Water Supply and Pollution Abatement Committee that I was very much interested in. It was always chaired by the District's engineer commissioner and the principal job that we were trying to do was to clean up the Potomac River. We adopted Water Quality Standards.

We went at it from that direction rather than starting at the upper end so to speak. We tried to adopt standards for the Potomac River at different stages along the River. In other words, the water quality standard above the water supply was considerably higher than it was down at Mount Vernon. The reason for that is two-fold. One that it should be and second that it was not economically feasible to clean up the water down as far as Mt. Vernon. It was below most of the major treatment plants and the cost of cleaning it up was something that we couldn't even attempt to reach. We knew that the District of Columbia system had holes in it. The so-called Georgetown gap existed then. The District of Columbia and the city of Alexandria had combined sewers in the old parts- they had sewers that carried both storm water and sanitary sewer, so that when there was a very heavy rainfall they would overflow into the river. The correction of those - the price was just more than the people were willing to pay. So we went at it very modestly, shall we say, but we did make some progress and we had some good engineers working with us. We had sanitary engineers through-out the Metropolitan area working with the committee and this was, shall we say, the first attempt of the local governments to solve that problem. There were other committees that worked on other things - the transportation planning board - what grew into the transportation planning board was working on highways and out of that came Metro and I was active in that too, in the basic organization that led to the development of Metro. People that were most instrumental in that were Senator Charles R. Fenwick from Arlington and a gentleman from Montgomery County and the District Commissioners all were active in it. The police systems were coordinated, they had services set-up where they could reach each other quickly and finally a data bank. The other thing that we started in those early days was something that nobody had thought of - nobody had paid any attention to

and even the members of the committee thought well maybe this isn't really necessary, but maybe it's a good idea. This was the air pollution monitoring system and after two or three years we began to realize that it really was necessary. Before that nobody realized that Washington had an air-pollution problem.

Coleman: Was regional cooperation very easy in those days?

Wilkins: No, it was rather difficult. Regional get-togethers was no problem, but solving the problems was another thing. It had to be done by persuasion, by negotiation, conversation. The Council of Governments, even when it became the Council of Governments, had no power - it still doesn't. It has the power of persuasion, newspaper advocacy to help it, but it was necessary and we did some pioneering in that field for this area. There were three or four councils of governments under various forms in various areas of the country but not very many.

Of course, what had happened across the country was that some of the metropolitan areas had consolidated and others had independent authorities that overlapped the boundaries. New York was in probably the worst shape, because of its authorities. When you get too many authorities, nobody has control. An authority will control one facet, but that's all. Well, we had to go to that when it came to the actual construction and operation of Metro because there was no other way to do it and I think as an operational agency, an authority is a good idea where it's absolutely necessary. But I don't think there is any excuse for an authority at the local level. I didn't think so in Fairfax County when we set up the Water Authority. I see no excuse. The only reason we had to do that was that we couldn't get the bonds passed. You asked about bonds earlier. That was one bond issue that we lost, the water bonds. That was because the private utility that served the Alexandria-Fairfax area with water put a great deal of money into

the campaign. So the only thing we could do was to set up an authority which could float its bonds without a referendum. And the Water Authority was set up for short terms, three year terms so it would take only three years to get rid of them, if the County ever wanted to do so. Now that they have bonds of their own it would probably be more difficult to do.

Coleman: You were on the Board at the time of the adoption of the Year 2000 Plan for the Washington Metropolitan area?

Wilkins: Yes, I was not only on the Board, I was an alternate delegate to the National Capitol Area Regional Planning Agency, so was in on the Year 2000 Planning. Basically, if you took a metropolitan area out in the middle of nowhere, a flat piece of land and adopted the wedges and corridors plan it would be great. We had one problem in Virginia that the plan completely ignored and that was that the watersheds of Fairfax County go in a different direction, then the transportation plan. Even then it might be possible to coordinate them so that you would have your communities and this Fairfax has followed to some extent. You have your communities, your big centers coming where the transportation artery crosses the watershed, so that youv'e got both of of your two major public facilities available - the sewer and the highway transportation from that center, and it's worked out more by accident than by design. Actually it didn't come out of somebody's head - it was already to some extent in operation.

Coleman: Was the adoption of the Year 2000 Plan - how did that really come about? Did all of the communities provide some input into it?

Wilkins: Yes, through the National Capital Area Regional Planning Commission.

Coleman: And then each political jurisdiction adopted it?

Wilkins: Yes, but I don't think that all of them did adopt it, in fact, I'm not sure whether Fairfax has or not. I'm not certain about that. One thing about the wedges and corridors though that poses a problem, particularly where watersheds are the other way. You've got your highways, your transportation arteries with wedges in between that were supposed to some extent to remain vacant. They overlooked the real economic problem. That it is almost impossible to keep them vacant. You've got a sewer line going this way and a highway going that way. We did it one time - we got a sewer program that provided for something called a limited access sewer. Well, you know how long that remained, not very long. Cause if a sewer line goes through somebody's land you can't prevent him from connecting.